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MATT BLUNT
GOVERNOR

March 19, 2007

STATE CAPITOL
ROOM 216
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The Honorable Bill Foster
1404 Fairgrounds Road
Jefferson City, Missouri 65109

The Honorable Thea Sherry
21st Judicial Circuit-Division 35
St. Louis County Court Building
7900 Carondelet
Clayton, Missouri 63105

Dear Senator Foster, Justice Sherry, and Members of the Missouri Task Force on Children's Justice:

Over the years through leadership among the legislative, judicial and executive branches of government and the private sector, Missouri has taken major steps to improve its child welfare system. In the past year, mandates that child welfare court hearings be held in a timely manner have been met 92 percent of the time, accreditation is proceeding successfully and the increased standards for background checks for all foster parent household members over the age of 17 are in place.

However, it has been three years since the General Assembly passed House Bill 1453, "The Dominic James Memorial Foster Care Reform Act of 2004." The tragic event that led to this reform legislation is a reminder that we must be vigilant in the ongoing reform of our foster care system. In the months preceding the passage of HB1453, there were a number of commissions and task forces that spent a great deal of time reviewing Missouri's system and making recommendations which ultimately were incorporated into the legislation. Missouri has established Task Forces and Boards to focus their attention on our child welfare system to ensure we are continuing to provide Missouri's children with quality care and treatment. The Missouri Task Force on Children's Justice is a prime example of a group developed to review our programs and recommend improvements.

Therefore, I am requesting that the Missouri Task Force on Children's Justice spend the next several months reviewing Missouri's progress on the implementation of "The Dominic James Memorial Foster Care Reform Act of 2004" and provide recommendations for areas of improvement by September 30, 2007. The expertise of the members on this task force will provide for a thorough review and thoughtful recommendations.

I appreciate your service on this task force and your willingness to accept this charge.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Matt Blunt".

Matt Blunt